

Dog in Houston tests positive for rabies

DOVER – A family dog in Houston, Delaware tested positive for rabies after biting his two adult owners. The victims were bitten while attempting to put the dog in a kennel and the animal became aggressive towards them. The dog was not leashed when outside and the home has no fenced backyard, so it is not possible to determine how or when the animal got infected. Additionally, the dog was not up to date on its rabies vaccination. The animal was euthanized and tested for rabies, which returned a positive result. The two individuals bitten by the dog have begun treatment.

The dog was an adult, medium-sized male pit bull, red and tan with white markings.

Anyone in the Houston area (Kent County) who thinks they might have been bitten, scratched, or come in contact with the rabid dog should immediately contact their health care provider or call the DPH Rabies Program at 302-744-4995. An epidemiologist is available 24/7. Anyone who thinks their pet may have been bitten by this dog should call their private veterinarian or the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) at 302-698-4630.

Since Jan. 1, 2018, the Division of Public Health (DPH) has performed rabies tests on 20 animals; this is the second positive case for 2018. A raccoon tested positive in January. In 2017, DPH performed rabies tests on 143 animals, 16 of which were confirmed to be rabid, including five raccoons, six cats, two dogs, two bats, and one fox. Six of the positive rabies cases in 2017 involved a bite to humans. DPH only announces those rabies cases for which it is possible the animal had unknown contacts with humans and there is a risk of exposure to the community.

Rabies in humans and animals cannot be cured once symptoms appear. If the animal is of unknown origin, or unavailable to be quarantined or tested, DPH recommends that people receive post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment, a series of four vaccinations, as a precautionary measure.

Rabies is an infectious disease affecting the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Infection can occur through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or if saliva from such an animal gets into the eyes, nose, mouth, or an opening in the skin.

Fortunately, rabies is also almost completely preventable. DPH recommends that members of the public take the necessary steps to stay clear of exposure to rabies. Rabies prevention begins with the animal owner. Vaccination of pets and livestock is a crucial factor in rabies prevention.

- All dogs, cats, and ferrets 6 months of age and older are required by Delaware law to be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. Consider vaccinating livestock and horses as well. It is recommended to consult with your private veterinarian if you have any questions regarding whether your animal(s) should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Spaying or neutering your pet may reduce the tendency to roam or fight and, thus, reduce the chance they will be exposed to rabies.
- Do not keep your pet's food or water outdoors; bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep your garbage securely covered.
- Do not handle unfamiliar animals, including cats and dogs, even if they appear friendly.

For more information on the DPH rabies program, visit <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rabies.html> or call 1-866-972-9705 or 302-744-4995. For more information on

rabies, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.